



The Pipeline

Make a pledge to Bowl for Kids' Sake

By Anya Armes Weber



Don't forget to make a pledge soon for your coworkers who are participating in Big Brothers Big Sisters' Bowl for Kids' Sake next month.

You can make a pledge in any amount or per pin knocked down. Cabinet teams will bowl Friday, March 15.

Bowl for Kids' Sake raises money for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bluegrass, which serves Franklin and surrounding counties. The program matches adults with children ages 6-13 who are from single-parent homes.

To sign up your team or find out who you can sponsor, contact the Bowl for Kids' Sake representative from your office or Cabinet coordinator Eboney Mayewski in the Office of Performance Enhancement at 564-0068.

Bake Sale



A bake sale from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. on Friday, March 1, will benefit Big Brothers Big Sisters. Stop by the sale in the CHR lobby. For information, call Eboney or e-mail her at Eboney.Mayewski@mail.state.ky.us.

Flex Account Deadline is March 31

By Anya Armes Weber

March 31 is the deadline for employees with funds in their 2001 Commonwealth Choice Flexible Spending Accounts to file for reimbursement. Request forms and receipts for last year's health services must be postmarked by that date.

Hunt, Dupree and Rhine, the account's administrator, has an automated phone line to check on balances and claims: (800) 413-6706. You must enter your Social Security number to get information. If you need to speak with an administrator, call (800) 403-2839.

You can check your account information online, too, at <https://www.online-enrollment.com/HDR/Login.asp>. You'll need your Social Security number and the four-digit PIN from your quarterly statement.



The ABCs of EAL

Now that most Cabinet staff members have completed the Everyone a Leader skill-building sessions, it doesn't hurt to have small reminders of the lessons we studied. "The ABCs of EAL" features tips that can help us improve our relationships with coworkers and our service to the families of Kentucky.

This week: D

The **dialogue model** isn't complicated. It involves two or more people talking about issues. Dialogue allows us to find common ground with others.

March 1, 2002
Volume 2002, Issue 8

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For more information go to <http://www.kytc.state.ky.us/BuckleUpKentucky.htm>



Cabinet Uses Research to Enhance Service Quality and Results

By Lisa Wallace, CFC Communications

Sometimes, lost in her dream job, Ruth Huebner floats free of time.

Laboring amid overcrowded bookshelves and stacks of presentation charts, she will look up, sense the silence and realize it's 9 p.m. Her co-workers have left the state Human Resources Building hours ago.

Since July, driven by a scholar's quiet passion, Huebner has guided Kentucky to the leading edge of states that use research to reshape their social services.

Some time back, leaders of the Cabinet for Families and Children decided to create a service delivery system based on proven needs, measurable outcomes and fact-based policy development.

To utilize the data necessary to do that, they needed a skilled researcher who could conduct customer satisfaction studies and program evaluation. They found what they sought in Huebner, a professor of occupational therapy at Eastern Kentucky University.

An acclaimed, widely published researcher, Huebner, who holds a doctorate in psychology, joined the CFC staff full-time on July 1 as a contract employee "on loan" from ECU. Only three other states are believed to have comparable research specialists.

The chance to fulfill a professional goal and land her 'dream job' may have passed her by had it not been for happenstance and a sluggish copier. While Huebner was assembling class materials late one evening in October 2000, a copy machine took an unusually long time warming up. She passed the time by paging through the Chronicle of Higher Education, and a recruitment ad for a child welfare researcher caught her eye.

"I maybe look through the Chronicle one or two times a year," Huebner said. "I wasn't even thinking about changing jobs, but the position title perfectly described my dream job - conducting research in a field I love."

She clipped the ad and discussed it with her husband the next day. Despite her doubts about getting the job, and with her husband's support and encouragement, she answered the ad.

"It was a national search so I didn't imagine they'd even consider someone from in-state," she said. "But, I couldn't stop thinking, 'I WANT this job,' and knew I'd always regret it if I didn't at least go for it." The wait was a long one, but by the following March, CFC had its ideal child welfare researcher and Huebner had her dream job.

She began by designing a representative and reliable customer satisfaction survey process to be implemented in all 16 CFC service regions. To date, five service regions have completed the survey process and are using the results to enhance client service delivery. The remaining regions are scheduled to complete the process by mid-June.

The survey is designed to measure how well the cabinet is responding to actual needs and where improvements are needed based on responses from CFC personnel, clients of CFC's Protection and Permanency, Child Support and Family Support agencies, foster and adoptive parents, and community partners. When all responses are analyzed, Huebner generates a report detailing her findings. She then works with each region to interpret survey

responses and use them to make needed changes in practice.

The survey findings provide far more precise insights into perceptions and satisfaction levels than were ever available in the past. For example, cabinet officials now know that among a representative sample of foster/adoptive parents in Fayette County, 82 percent feel they have received sufficient training, but only 43 percent believe their foster children receive "quality" visits from their protection workers.

CFC's customer satisfaction survey and the research methodology it uses to evaluate and refine practices have attracted national attention. Huebner said Kentucky is on the leading edge of what she expects will become a trend to use research data to improve social and human services policy and delivery.

Roger Ward, manager of decision support and research for Hamilton County, Ohio, Job and Family Services and a professional associate of Huebner, said he, too, expects more states to hire child welfare researchers to help maximize resources and enhance outcomes. "Knowing how well or how poorly ideas work in practice, an organization can then create a much more effective and robust service delivery and program structure," Ward said.

The CFC research position also appealed to Huebner because it fits nicely with her belief that research should have practical value and should be presented in a way that makes its relevance clear.

"I was very much attracted to this opportunity because I knew the data generated would be used to guide cabinet policy and practice and to base decisions on reality and facts," Huebner said. "That alone represents a paradigm change from theory- or emotion-driven practice to evidence-driven practice."

In addition to conducting research, Huebner will help identify funding sources and expand CFC's ongoing commitment to research. She is working to identify all available data pertaining

to CFC's mission and hopes to index these resources to provide a convenient, one-stop data clearinghouse for other researchers.

Finally, Huebner said her role at CFC includes helping Kentucky and the nation understand the good things the cabinet does. She plans to use her affiliation with the National Council on Research in Child Welfare, which focuses on using research knowledge to improve practice, to promote Kentucky research efforts.

In April, a special symposium, "Making Kentucky's Diverse Families Work: A Celebration of Research," will provide exposure for the high quality research on social service topics that is being undertaken in Kentucky. Huebner is deeply involved in the planning and production of the symposium, which will be held at the Kentucky History Center in Frankfort. The event is being sponsored by several universities and state research agencies in collaboration with the Cabinet for Families and Children.

Huebner said the research position at CFC is the product of the shared vision of Cabinet Secretary Viola Miller and Bruce Wolford, director of the EKU Training Resource Center, a professional development and training center and long-time partner with the cabinet.

EKU along with seven other public post-secondary institutions in Kentucky make up the University Training Consortium. The cabinet, the consortium and EKU provide funding for Huebner's position.

"Secretary Miller saw the value in having a full-time researcher physically on-site with CFC as a way to advance the cabinet's objectives and, thereby, advance quality of life opportunities for all Kentuckians," Huebner said.

Miller said the cabinet's investment in child welfare research will "pay tremendous dividends in terms of enhancing outcomes for our families and making the best use of the Commonwealth's resources."

Huebner will teach a course on applied research this summer through the University of Kentucky and ECU. Her aims for the course, she said, are to promote the cabinet's research activities, "demonstrate the role research can play in improving people's lives and begin grooming the next generation of researchers for careers in social service research."

"KEAPing" Up with Employee Needs

The Personnel Cabinet would like to spotlight one component of the employee benefits package. The Kentucky Employee Assistance Program has made available on-line screenings for depression and alcohol abuse. Both depression and alcohol abuse can decrease an employee's quality of life, and the first step to help is awareness. You are invited to try the screenings at: www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/login.asp (The keyword is Kentucky.)

The screenings are also available via a toll-free phone number for those with concerns about computer privacy. The toll-free number for the screenings is 1-877-769-5040.

The Kentucky Employee Assistance Program continues to provide State Government employees and their dependents with assessment and referral services for all personal problems. The Kentucky Employee Assistance Program can be reached at (502) 564-5788 or 1-800-445-5327.

Retirement Reception

There will be a retirement reception for Ruth McNabb, Family Support Supervisor for Harrison and Scott Counties, on Sunday, Mar. 3 from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. The reception will be held at the Community Education Center on Webster Avenue in Cynthia, Ky.



Governor Patton Signs Two Medicaid Bills into Law

On Feb. 21, Gov. Paul Patton signed House Bill 103, a bill creating a Medicaid Outpatient Pharmacy Program, and House Bill 170, another Medicaid measure that creates a dispensing fee.

"These are two legislative initiatives my administration has had an interest in this session," Patton said. "We have worked closely with the bill sponsors, who spent many hours on these bills and the people of Kentucky are the ones to benefit from their hard work."

House Bill 103 creates the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Advisory Committee that will be attached to the Department for Medicaid Services. The committee will consist of 14 members -- 12 of whom shall be physicians or pharmacists. The committee will report on the development and administration of an outpatient drug formulary and perform drug reviews and make recommendations on prior authorization and provide for an appeals process. Rep. Jimmy Lee, D-Elizabethtown, was the primary sponsor of HB 103.

House Bill 170 relates to Medicaid dispensing fees and declaring an emergency. It requires the Cabinet for Health Services and any entity holding a contract to perform a dispensing fee study on dispensing medications to Medicaid eligible recipients by October 31, 2003 and every three years thereafter. The research study will include factors that influence dispensing and acquisition costs and require sufficient sample size for study validity, compare differences in fees and costs among other states' Medicaid programs and commercial payors, and require a reasonable fee for dispensing prescription medications. Rep. Mary Lou Marzian, D-Louisville, was the primary sponsor of HB 170.

For more information on the bills and co-sponsors of the measures, click <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/record/02rs/record.htm>